

July 2006

TIME TO HIKE UP CANYON PRESERVATION EFFORTS

Ask anyone in San Diego what they value about our city. Its natural beauty and environment is sure to be on their list. Included in that is San Diego's system of urban canyons, which has long been recognized by planners and community members as one of our region's most valuable and distinguishing features. In addition to their majesty, our canyons are a vital component of our watershed system. However, the City of San Diego has not placed enough emphasis on protecting these existing resources and maximizing their value to enhance our quality of life.

As urban densification increases, so does pressure on our canyons. Citizen interest in restoring our link to nature and preserving our canyons as a sanctuary from the urban environment is also growing. Volunteer canyon preservation efforts have been expanding steadily for a number of years. In fact, the Sierra Club's Canyon Campaign has successfully organized over 30 Friends of Canyons groups that seek to organize citizens around the care and protection of our local canyons. These dedicated groups regularly

remove trash, weeds and other invasive plants, as well as maintain trails, plant native vegetation and provide information to the community about local canyons.

Despite these efforts, canyons are still threatened by encroaching urbanization. A portion of the 32nd Street Canyon in Golden Hill is targeted by the San Diego Unified School District to be graded and filled so that a playground can be constructed for the adjacent elementary school. In University City, canyon advocates are concerned that the proposed Regents Road Bridge over Rose Canyon will forever alter one of the last best natural environments in that community.

Recent research by a local think tank, San Diego Civic Solutions, calls for unifying our region's canyons through the creation of a Regional Canyonlands Park. This proposal urges the creation of a public/private partnership to create synergy around our canyons and identify funding for canyon protection, enhancement and restoration. The end result would be a visionary open space park like no other in our country, let alone California.

If we really value our canyons, the city should make every effort to preserve them. I have called for a comprehensive canyon management strategy many times over the years. Despite that, progress has been slow. The City has not been able to implement a program that treats our canyons as a single. holistic, open space system because of the city's limited financial

> resources. Although additional staff is badly needed to immediately address the backlog of over 250 sites, encompassing over 1,000 acres, that could be dedicated as open space, there are still some steps that can be taken immediately to begin the preservation process.

> One possible way to pay for this effort is to use the Environmental Growth Fund, a section of the city budget funded with fees the city charges utility companies. The Environmental Growth Fund is intended to be used for open space

acquisitions or other environmental projects. I would like to see a portion of this fund used for canyon protection activities such as weed control, erosion control, habitat restoration, trails

advocates and other stakeholders to plan for a comprehensive strategy to protect and enhance our canyons. This might include the compilation of a detailed inventory of all city-owned canyon space, identifying which parcels should be dedicated as open space, and an overall management strategy.

improvements and signage. Additionally, City staff should begin a dialogue with canyon

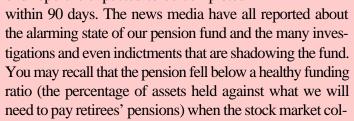


San Diego Civic Solutions, along with the Sierra Club, made a presentation on the Canyonlands proposal at the City Council Committee on Natural Resources and Culture on Wednesday, June 28. The meeting was a springboard for galvanizing support for the goal of tying San Diego's network of urban canyons together under a cohesive park system, as well as for coordinating citywide efforts to make the most of this extraordinary resource.

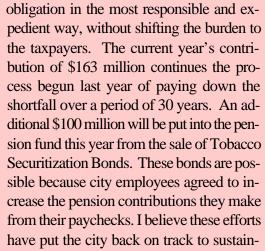
COUNCIL BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR'S REPORT

In June, the Council's Budget and Finance Committee heard firsthand from the San Diego City Employees Retirement Fund's (SDCERS) actuarial consultant who pre-

pared a report on the health of the pension, the long-term plan to raise the pension's funded ratio, and the justification behind the amount the city will be required to pay into the pension this year. The full report is available on the SDCERS website at http://www.sdcers.org/forms_newsevents.jsp. The Budget Committee also met the actuarial consultant who has been hired by the Mayor to review and confirm the information contained in the SDCERS report. This second report is expected to be completed



lapsed early in this decade, compounding the effects of the decision to push the largest pension payments into future years. The City Council is committed to paying down this



ing a healthy pension fund. We have a ways to go before the debt is paid off, but like a mortgage on a house, we are on a steady path to that day when the debt is retired. We will continue to look at options for reducing the fiscal risks of the system to the city while protecting the interests of current and future retirees.



THERMAL IMAGER SAVES THE DAY

Firefighters from Mid-City's Station 17 saved a family and their apartment late last month with the assistance of a thermal imager the city was able to purchase with \$11,000 of FY2006 Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. The fire, which was caused by an unattended candle, occured at an apartment complex on the 4400 block of Menlo Avenue. Luckily, no one was hurt, but the family of four was displaced and the total damage was estimated at \$75,000. Red Cross is currently assisting this family. The thermal imager allowed firefighters to get to the source quickly and determine whether anyone was inside the apartment and needed to be rescued. The equipment also helped them to find out whether or not the fire got into the walls and ceiling.

WORKS OF ART IN SOUTH PARK

Thanks to the hard work of the South Park Action Council (SPAC), the Utility Box Painting Project is well underway. SPAC member Leslie Kilpatrick found a great group of artists from a local school who are using the colors of South Park and themes that signify the history and charm of this unique community. You may have noticed that some of the boxes are already painted and look wonderful! Others will be painted when the rest of the Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding becomes available. If you haven't noticed this wonderful project, I recommend you take a walk down 30th and Fern Streets and take a look around.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

Under Construction

Work is underway to complete a streetscape project on Adams Avenue west of I-805 to Hamilton Street. Last year, decorative street lights were installed and now work on sidewalk/curb repairs and new street trees is underway. The Adams Avenue Business Association is hosting weekly meetings with the affected business owners to mitigate construction impacts. Work is expected to be com-

pleted within the next few weeks.

Starting Soon

Two blocks of new sidewalks will be installed soon on the south side of University Avenue from 28th Street to Granada Avenue. I have been working with the North Park Mainstreet Design Committee on design and pre-construction issues. The project is scheduled to start in the fall and I will update you with the status as we get closer to construction.

I provided funds to start the replacement of the bollards on the south end of the Vermont Street pedestrian bridge (the old bollards were removed when vehicles hit them on a regular basis). The first step will be to restore the electrical system and later this year, new bollards will be constructed. I want to thank the University Heights Community Development Corporation and Community Association for being partners in this project.

Completed

I, along with the El Cajon Boulevard Business Improvement

Association and community members recently dedicated the center medians on El Cajon Boulevard between Texas Street and 30th Street. The ceremony was held on Thursday, July 13th in front of the Lafayette Hotel, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard. This project completed the medians along El Cajon Boulevard from Park Boulevard to Fairmount Avenue (over 3 miles) on a streetscape project that began 18 years ago. In addition to the land-scaped medians, new pedestrian ramps,

two upgraded traffic signals, repairs to the street light electrical system were also part of the project.



COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP AGENDAS

In an effort to reduce costs, the City of San Diego has discontinued the practice of copying and distributing planning group agendas via U.S. mail. Beginning July 1, agendas will be posted on the City's website at www.sandiego.gov/planning. If you would like to receive agendas electronically, please email sdplanninggroups@sandiego.gov. Be sure to indicate which community groups you are interested in.

Please see page 7 of this newsletter for a listing of Community Planning Groups in Council District Three.

MEETING NOTICE

The City of San Diego's Land Use & Housing Council Committee will hold a public workshop to discuss the General Plan Update - Public Facilities, Services and Safety, Recreation and Economic Prosperity elements.

> Date: July 19, 2006 Time: 2:00pm

Location: Council Chambers, 12th Floor,

City Administration Building,

202 C Street, San Diego, California

For more information, please contact Nancy Bragado, Acting Program Manager at (619) 533-4549.

JULY 1: NEW FY2007 BUDGET YEAR BEGINS

Council passes first budget under strong mayor form of government

July 1 is the first day of the city's new fiscal year. As the chair of the first-ever Council Budget and Finance Committee, I wanted to recap this year's budget process for you and highlight a few victories in the budget for the fiscal 2006-07 year.

A healthy economy and rising property values have helped to cushion rising costs in both the recently-finished fiscal year's and FY2007 budgets. Fiscal year 2005-06, which ended June 30, saw a surplus of \$16.4 million. That surplus will be put into the city's emergency reserve.

The total FY2007 budget is \$2.6 billion. The General Fund makes up \$1.01 billion of that and covers police, fire, parks, libraries and general services. The remaining budget is set-aside for capital improvements.

The budget's growth is largely attributed to rising tax revenues and one-time reimbursement of funds the state has held back from cities in recent years. The budget's revenue growth, however, barely covered the natural growth in the city's costs. While labor costs are essentially flat, other expenses are experiencing inflation, as anyone who's filled their gas tank recently knows.

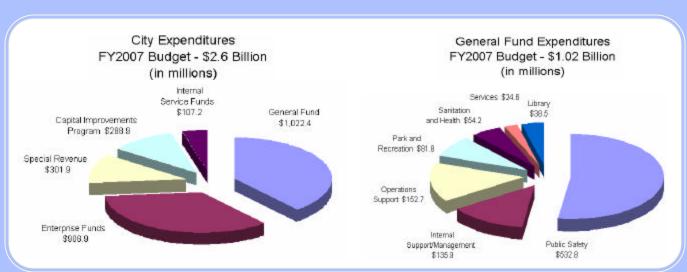
Fortunately, this modest revenue growth meant that unlike recent years, more painful cuts in services were not needed. Unfortunately, however, the revenue growth was not enough to enable us to restore any of those services. This will remain my highest priority when the revenues become available.

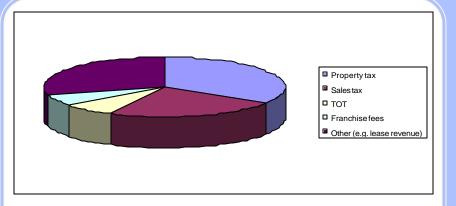
Unfortunately, next year's budget, for fiscal year 2007-08, may be more difficult than this year's. Existing labor contracts promised a cost-of-living adjustment to certain classes of employees in FY2008. Employees have been paying an increased retirement contribution in their paychecks since July 2005.

The Council's Independent Budget Analyst also predicts that the economy may slow – home price appreciation, which affects property taxes, has already tapered off – which is likely to mean that city revenues will grow less than expenses. The city's budget has a chronic imbalance of revenues versus the funds needed for basic services, and we may have some painful choices to make when the FY2008 budget process begins next spring.

For this year, however, there were a few small victories, especially for the residents of District 3:

- The addition of \$378,000 in new monies for graffiti control, one of my top neighborhood priorities. This increase in funding will raise the graffiti removal contract with Urban Corps by \$250,000 and enable the city to add one two-person crew of utility workers.
- The creation of a citywide Commission on Gang Prevention, which will coordinate community anti-gang activities and promote programs that provide alternatives for our youth.
- The continuation of Sunday hours at the City Heights library, which were re-instated last year after we fought for them, but were not guaranteed for this year.
- \$1,565,000 in funding for replacing aging roofs at Bud Kearns Pool and throughout Balboa Park. Three Balboa Park buildings made the short list of projects chosen for deferred maintenance this year: the Museum of Man, Museum of Art, and The Old Globe. The list also included \$270,000 to repair the 46th Street slope failure.





WHERE DO THE CITY'S REVENUES COME FROM?

In millions:		
Property tax	\$ 344.2	34%
Sales tax	\$ 234.9	23%
TOT	\$ 72.9	7%
Franchise fees	\$ 64.8	6%
Other (e.g. lease revenue)	\$ 296.3	29%
TOTAL	\$ 1,013.1	100%

- \$1 million in funding to help ease the shortage of San Diego police officers by hiring 15 civilians to free up desk-bound officers to return to the streets.
- Restoration of the 30 civilian Police Service Officer (PSO) positions that were cut last year.
- \$8 million for resurfacing and slurry sealant for our deteriorating streets.

Citywide, I was pleased to work for the following initiatives:

- Increased staffing for the Ethics Commission, along with the addition of new investigative staff.
- Increased staffing for Disability Services.
- The restoration of the Assistant Director at Robb Field and roving hourly recreation center staff.
- The restoration of a youth services librarian.
- The addition of a Historical Resources Board Senior Planner.

The Council also implemented policy changes that will strengthen the city's ongoing budgetary management and make it more transparent:

- The Council refused to commit funds for new facilities that do not also have budgets set aside for operating expenses. Without this action, resources would be drawn away from existing facilities elsewhere in the city whenever a new facility opened. Since nine such parks were scheduled to open in FY2007, the Council identified new funding for their operating expenses.
- We have asked the Police Chief to return to Council with a plan for improving recruitment and retention in the Police Department, which is presently losing more officers each month to retirements and transfers than it is recruiting to new classes.
- The Council this year made a clear commitment to increasing the city's emergency reserve. Establishing a healthy balance in the reserve sends a signal to the public, banks, and bond rating agencies that the city is operating in a fiscally responsible manner. Further, the existence of solid levels of reserves is an indicator of financial health and strength. Concerned about the low level of reserves set aside for FY2007, the Council identified funding to contribute an additional \$7.2 million this year.
- The Council supported the Mayor's proposal to cancel Service Level Agreements between the Water Department and General Fund departments that had been deemed inappropriate uses of Water Department funds.

On a personal note, I'd like to convey a special thank you to the many citizens who came down to testify during this year's budget hearings and, as always, to the city's hard-working staff. The city is not out of the woods yet, but I feel confident that we are on the right path to financial recovery.

METRO VILLAS/METRO CAREER CENTER WINS NATIONAL SMART GROWTH AWARD

I was honored to join Mayor Jerry Sanders to announce that the Metro Villas/Metro Career Center, located in City Heights, has been selected as a national model for smart planning by the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO.)

The Metro project won a NAHRO Award of Merit, which places it in the running for the organization's National Award of Excellence, to be announced later this summer. The project was funded, in part, by three City of San Diego agencies—the Redevelopment Agency, Centre City Development Corporation and the San Diego Housing Commission. The City Heights Metro Center Project transformed a once blighted property into a dynamic, mixed-use development that provides multiple benefits for the surrounding

neighborhood and the entire San Diego region. The \$47 million project includes both office and housing components, the Metro Career Center and Metro Villas, respectively.

The attractive four-story office building and 120 new affordable family housing units feature ample structured parking and landscaped open space areas. Time and time again, this project has been hailed as "a perfect example of

smart growth." It is wonderful that it is finally receiving national recognition.

The California Tax Credit Allocation Committee awarded \$18.8 million in federal and state tax credits to make this affordable housing project possible—the only affordable

housing development in San Diego to be awarded these tax credits in 2002.

With the presence of the Metro Career Center—in particular, the Work Force Partnership and City Heights Community Development Corporation—many of our Mid-City neighbors have improved their jobs and their incomes so that they will be able to continue to live in and reap the benefits of the vibrant and

revitalized community of City Heights.



I've always believed that the wealth of my district is its people and the Metro project was well worth the investment. The career center, the villas and the wonderful parking garage were investments in the community and our workforce. The Metro Project has truly set the standard for future developments of this nature and I couldn't be more proud that it has happened in my district.

FREE SUMMER LUNCH PROGRAM FOR YOUTH AGES 2-18

Under a federally funded program, the San Diego Unified School District, in partnership with The City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department, is offering free summer lunch for kids. All children ages 2-18 are eligible to participate. There is no enrollment necessary, no paperwork needed and no income qualifications. The free lunch program is available June 21st to August 30th at the following locations in the Third District (call locations for times):

Rec. Center	Address	Phone (619)
Adams	3491 Adams Avenue	235-1149
Azalea	2596 Violet Street	235-1162
Balboa Park	2221 Morley Field Dr.	525-8264
City Heights	4380 Landis Street	641-6125
Golden Hill	2600 Golf Course Dr.	235-1138
Mid-City Gym	4302 Landis Street	516-3082
North Park	4044 Idaho Street	235-1152



DISTRICT THREE

MONTHLY DISTRICT THREE PLANNING

Balboa Park Committee

Santa Fe Room of the Balboa Park Club (Off Presidents Way west of Park Blvd.)

Meets the first Thursday of the month, 6:30pm

Contact: Darlene Davies, chair: ddavies@mail.sdsu.edu

City Heights Area Planning Committee

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Metro Career Center, Community Room, 3910 University Avenue

Meets the first Monday of the month, 6:30pm Contact: Michael Sprague, Chair, 619/255-7902.

Greater Golden Hill Planning Committee (GGHPC)

Balboa Golf Course Clubhouse, Golden Hill

Meets the second Wednesday of the month, 6:30pm

Contact: Patricia Shields, Chair, (619) 295-1374.

Greater North Park Community Planning Committee

North Park Christian Fellowship, Second Floor, 2901 North Park Way

Meets the third Tuesday of the month, 6:30pm.

Contact: Vicki Granowitz, Chair, (619) 584-1203, or vdgwrl@aol.com

Kensington/Talmadge Planning Group

Kensington Community Church, 4773 Marlborough Drive

Meets the second Wednesday of the month, 6:30pm.

Contact: Fred Lindahl, Chair, 619/287-3157.

Normal Heights Community Planning Group

4649 Hawley Boulevard

Meets the first Tuesday of the month, 6:00pm

Contact: Judy Elliot, Chair, 619/563-5473.

Uptown Planners

Joyce Beers Community Center, 1230 Cleveland Ave. in the Uptown District

Meets the first Tuesday of the month, 6:30pm

Contact: Leo Wilson, Chair, 619/574-0109.

How To Contact Us

Councilmember Toni Atkins 202 C Street, MS #10A San Diego, CA 92101 Telephone: (619) 236-6633

Fax: (619) 595-1481

Email: ToniAtkins@sandiego.gov

MONTHLY BUSINESS ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

Adams Avenue Business Association

4649 Hawley Boulevard

Meets the first Tuesday of the month, 7:30am

Contact: 619/282-7329

City Heights Business Association

Board meetings: second Wednesday of every month at 8am

at the Metro Career Center Community Room,

3910 University Avenue. Phone: 619/516-2282

El Cajon Blvd. Business Improvement Association

3727 El Cajon Boulevard

Meets the second Thursday of the month, 11:30am

Contact: 619/283-3608

Hillcrest Association

Joyce Beers Community Center, 1230 Cleveland Ave. in

the Uptown District

Meets the second Tuesday of the month, 5:00pm

Contact: 619/299-3330.

North Park Main Street

3076 University Avenue

Meets the second Wednesday of the month, 7:00am

Contact: 619/294-2501

COMMUNITY RELATIONS OFFICERS

Rick Edgil (Hillcrest, North Park, University Heights) -- 619/291-1729 Richard Fox (Normal Heights, Kensingon/Talmadge) -- 619/531-2815

Gary Gonzales (Golden Hill, South Park) -- 619/744-9500

Pat Norris (Fairmount Park) -- 619/531-1515 Jim Tulumello (City Heights West) -- 619/516-3009

MONTHLY

REDEVELOPMENT MEETINGS

City Heights Project Area Committee

Metro Career Center, Community Room, 3910 University Ave. Meets the second Monday of the month, 6pm Contact: Karen Bucey, Chair, 619/957-5818.

North Park Project Area Committee

California Nat'l Bank, 3180 University Ave., 2nd Floor Meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm Contact: Roger Lewis, Chair, at 619/881-8977, or the city staff member at 619/533-5284.

DISTRICT THREE STAFF

Denise Price, Chief of Staff.

Dale Kelly Bankhead, Communications Director; LGBT community liaison; HIV/AIDS issues; special orders of business. **April Chesebro**, Council Representative to Kensington, Talmadge, South Park, Golden Hill and University Heights; African-American community liaison; homeless and senior issues.

Daisy Gordon Crompton, Committee Consultant to the Committee on Budget and Finance; housing issues.

Stephen Hill, Policy Advisor/Council Representative to Metropolitan Transit System, SANDAG transportation, environment, libraries, arts and culture, land use citywide; MSCP, Transit Occupancy Tax, water issues, military/veterans issues; Council docket coordinator.

Pam Ison, Council Representative to City Heights; liaison to Asian/Pacific Islander community; City Heights redevelopment; SANDAG regional housing; school liaison and education issues; women's, youth, health and Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) issues; Chargers/Qualcomm Stadium; Community Development Block Grants; newsletter; webpage.

Cheli Mohamed, Executive Assistant to Councilmember Atkins and Chief of Staff Denise Price.

Monica Pelaez, Council Representative to North Park and Normal Heights; liaison to the Latino community; Police Department liaison and public safety issues; Fire and Life Safety Services liaison.

Jeffery Tom, Council Representative to Balboa Park, Uptown and Hillcrest; infrastructure, citywide business issues, energy, telecommunications, BID Council.

District Three Community/ Neighborhood Meetings

City Heights

<u>Azalea Park Neighborhood Association:</u> Meets the second Tuesday of the month at 2596 Violet Street at 6:30pm. Contact: info@azaleapark.org

<u>Cherokee Point Neighborhood Association:</u> Meets the fourth Wednesday at 6:30pm, Cherokee Point Elementary School, 3735 38th Street. Contact: 619/285-1611.

<u>City Heights Community Development Corporation:</u>
Meets the second Thursday of each month at 6pm at 4283 El Cajon Boulevard. 619/584-1535.

<u>Fairmount Park Neighborhood Association:</u> Meets the third Thursday of the month at 3850 Westgate Place at 6:30pm. Contact: FairmountPark92105@yahoo.com.

San Diego Model School Development Agency: Meets the fourth Thursday of each month at 10:00am at the Metro Career Center, 3910 University Avenue. For more information call Robin Allen at 619/578-7537, or check out www. sdmodelschool.net.

South Castle Neighborhood Association: Meets the third Tuesday of each month at 6:00pm at the Buddhist Temple, 3322 Central Avenue. For more information, contact Laurie Carlock at (619) 284-3118.

Swan Canyon: Meets the third Wednesday of the month at 3120 Euclid Avenue at 6:30 p.m. Contact Becky at rebecca@bairfinancial.com.

<u>Teralta West Neighborhood Alliance:</u> Meets every first and third Thursday of the month at 4286 Marlborough Street at 6:30pm. Contact: 619/281-3551.

Golden Hill

Greater Golden Hill Community Development
Corporation (GGHCDC): Meetings are held the third
Thursday of each month at 6:30pm at the Balboa Park
Golf Course Clubhouse. Contact: 619/696-9992

Kensington

<u>The Kensington/Talmadge Community Association:</u> Meets every third Wednesday at the Kensington Community Church, 4773 Marlborough Drive, beginning at 7pm. (dinner for a reasonable price is served prior)

Normal Heights

Normal Heights Cultural Council: Meets the third Thursday of each month from 6:00pm-7:30pm at 4649 Hawley Boulevard.

North Park

<u>Altadena Neighborhood Association:</u> Board meetings are the first Wednesday of the month at Santos Coffee at Thorn and 32nd streets. Contact: 619/280-6662.

Burlingame Neighborhood Association: Meets the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm at different locations each month. Contact: dbyrne4bna@cox.net.

North Park Community Association: Meets the fourth Thursday of each month at North Park Recreation Center, 4044 Idaho Street. Contact: info@northparksd.org

South Park

The South Park Action Council: Meetings are held biweekly on Mondays at 6:00 p.m. and last one hour. For information, e-mail Co-Chairs: Samantha Keenan at samkeenan@cox.net or Connie McDonough at conniemcdonough@cox.net.

Talmadge

<u>The Kensington/Talmadge Community Association</u> (see Kensington)

<u>The Talmadge Community Council (TCC)</u>: Meets every third Tuesday at 4725 Lucille Drive beginning at 6:30pm.

University Heights

The University Heights Community Development Corporation (CDC): Meets on the first Wednesday of the month at the CDC office located at 4452 Park Blvd, Suite 104, at 6:30pm.

The University Heights Crime Watch and Neighborhood Association: Meets on the first Thursday of the month at Alice Birney School Auditorium, 4345 Campus Avenue. Crime Watch at 6:30pm; UHNA at 7:00pm

How To Contact Us

Councilmember Toni Atkins 202 C Street, MS #10A San Diego, CA 92101 Telephone: (619) 236-6633 Fax: (619) 595-1481

Email: ToniAtkins@sandiego.gov